



The Urban Environmental Initiative (UEI) is a pilot program launched in 1995 under the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Region 1, New England, to address environmental and public health problems in urban cities. The UEI facilitates community based environmental protection in targeted cities by taking an active role in listening to community needs and concerns, identifying projects, and providing resources to implement projects that make measurable improvements in public health and the quality of the urban environment.

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Providence, RI



Photo: K.Kiley, US EPA

What Makes Providence Special?

- A major commercial, financial, and industrial center.
- Providence suffers from disparity in the taxable property values (only \$36,000 per capita in Providence compared with \$136,000 in Jamestown, RI).
- Residents experience lead poisoning, asthma, and other illnesses due to poor indoor air quality; polluted rivers and wetlands; and contaminated urban vacant lots.

Why Does Providence Need Special Attention?

- One in every three children has elevated blood lead levels.
- The Woonasquatucket River is the only river in the state that has a fish advisory due to high levels of dioxin, PCBs, and high bacteria levels.
- Providence has over 4,000 residential vacant lots, each with significant environmental and public health risks due to illegal dumping and urban rats.

What Are the Long Term Goals?

- To reduce childhood lead poisoning rates in the city, return urban vacant lots to productive use and restore the Woonasquatucket River to allow for swimming and fishing for urban residents.

Progress/Goals for the Future

What Partnership Progress Has Been Made?

- Final Report and Goals Management Plan for implementing recommendations from the Mayor's Safe Housing Lead Task Force was issued, which produced recommendations on how to reduce childhood lead poisoning through education and outreach, improving housing quality and funding.
- A 30 member stakeholder group implemented a "Do's and Don'ts for the Woonasquatucket River" education and outreach campaign.
- Special Vacant Lot Program was finalized and is currently allowing for the transfer of selected vacant lots to qualified local residents for the cost of \$1.00.
- EPA, Direct Action for Rights and Equality (DARE) and the City of Providence conducted soil sampling for lead poisoning on over 100 vacant lots.
- Hosted "Livable Providence 2000 Community Summit" to gather public input on how to improve quality of life in urban neighborhoods.

What Are The Major Actions Planned For 2000?

- Start implementing recommendations in the Mayor's Safe Housing Lead Task Force report.
- Incorporate ideas from the "Livable Providence 2000 Community Summit" into the City's five-year plan.
- Continue implementing the Special Vacant Lot Program and returning vacant lots to productive use.
- Release results from lead in soil sampling on 100 vacant lots in Providence.

City of Providence



Who Are The Partners?

Environmental Protection Agency • Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management • City of Providence, Department of Planning and Office of Neighborhood Environmental Affairs • Childhood Lead Action Project • Smart Growth Rhode Island • Keep Providence Beautiful • Save The Bay • Center for Hispanic Policy and Advocacy • Olneyville Housing Corporation • Southside Community Land Trust • Providence Environmental Strike Team and Environmental Court • Environmental Diversity Education Forum • The Providence Plan • Roger Williams Park Zoo • City Year • AmeriCorps • Brown University, Center for Environmental Studies • Direct Action for Rights and Equality • Youth in Action • South East Asian Economic Development Center • Youth in Action • Rhode Island Department of Health • Audubon Society of Rhode Island • Northern Rhode Island Conservation District • A.M.E.N., Inc. • Providence Community Health Center • South Providence Development Corporation



Providence UEI

Watershed Boundaries
Providence Neighborhoods

This map produced by the
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0.5 0 0.5 1 Miles



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Note: EPA-New England offers businesses and municipalities information and assistance to improve compliance with environmental laws and be better stewards of their local environment. Please call to learn how EPA can help.